

Staying Up To Date – Using Google Reader and RSS Feeds

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This tutorial has been designed to introduce you to RSS and take advantage of RSS Readers to efficiently manage your collection of orthopaedic news, journals, portals and PubMed updates. Using an RSS Reader can save you time and energy in managing your orthopaedic reading.

This tutorial focuses on Google Reader because many people already use Google for their online searching and will be more comfortable learning to use this new service from Google.

What is RSS?

RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication and is a standard web feed format for publishing regular updates to web-based content. A web feed is a data format used for serving users frequently updated content. Content distributors syndicate a web feed, thereby allowing users to subscribe to it. Making a collection of web feeds accessible in one spot is known as aggregation.

In the typical scenario of using web feeds, a web site publishes a feed link on their site which end users can register with an aggregator programme (also called a feed reader or a news reader) such as Google Reader. When you subscribe to a feed, Google Reader starts monitoring that feed for updates.

Compared to web sites, web feeds have a few advantages for the user experience:

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Users can be notified of new content without having to actively check for it.

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Content updates from multiple sources (news, journals, portals and PubMed) can be tracked and easily managed in one central location.

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The information presented to users in an aggregator is typically much simpler than most web sites. This decreases the time required to navigate complex web sites and remember where the content is located.

Web feeds also have some advantages compared to receiving frequently published content via e-mail:

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When subscribing to a feed, the user does not disclose their e-mail address, so the user is not increasing their exposure to threats associated with e-mail: spam, viruses, phishing, and identity theft.

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If the user wants to stop receiving news, they do not have to send an 'unsubscribe' request; the user can simply remove the feed from their aggregator.

Subscribing to RSS Feeds

Google supplies a convenient and simple service at <http://reader.google.com/> or <http://www.google.com/reader/>. Google Reader is a web-based RSS Reader, which means you can access it at any time from any computer with an Internet connection.

If you are not already a user of other Google services (such as G-mail) you need to create a Google Account. This takes less than 30 seconds and can be done by clicking on "Create an account now" on the Google Reader homepage (Figure 1). Once you've created your account, you will be sent an e-mail from Google to verify your account. Simply click on the link in the e-mail to activate your Google Account and return to the Google Reader homepage to begin.

Figure 1. Create a Google Account. (Click for larger image)

Once you sign in to Google Reader click on the Add subscription link and enter a search term to find feeds or paste a feed URL in the box (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Entering a subscription search term. (Click for larger image)

Google Reader will show you a list of RSS feeds which have been registered under that search term. This particular one ("orthopedic news") will show a number of sites that carry orthopaedic news and are regularly updated (Figure 3).

Figure 3. List of "Orthopedic News" RSS feeds. (Click for larger image)

To subscribe to one of these feeds click on the subscribe button.

Another way to subscribe occurs when you come across a site (like the American Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery) which has set up an RSS feed. This will normally be indicated on the site by a button with either RSS or XML on it (See <http://www.ejbs.org/rss/> for an example). When you click on the RSS or XML icon it will take you to a complicated looking page in older browsers (Internet Explorer 6 or older) or show the feed content in newer browsers (Firefox or Internet Explorer 7). Ignore everything except the URL address. Copy the address to the "Add subscription" window of the Reader programme. Once this address is inserted the feed will be added to your list.

Figure 4. Retrieve feed URL. (Click for larger image)

Reading Your Subscriptions

When you return to the Google Reader homepage you will see a list of your subscriptions and the number of unread items in each. Click on the title of the subscription or All items and the content for the feeds (read and unread) will be shown. Figure 5 shows the RSS feed from JBJS. The title is a link to the article on the main eJBJS site so you can download the full text if you have journal access.

Figure 5. Viewing the RSS feed in Google Reader. (Click for larger image)

Creating Custom RSS Feeds From PubMed

If you use PubMed for literature searches you may wish to be notified if new articles which satisfy your search criteria are published. You can do this using MyNCBI, which will send you an e-mail, or you can create a custom RSS feed from the PubMed web site. To do that, run the search and adjust the search criteria until it is sensitive and specific. Then use the drop down "Send To" menu to create a feed. The next page gives you the opportunity to name the search - otherwise the search string will be used as the search name. When you click on the Create Feed button a new page will be shown with an XML button. Click the button and copy the URL address to Google Reader to include this feed in your subscription list.

Figure 6. Select RSS Feed from the "Send to" drop down box. (Click for larger image)

Summary

Using RSS feeds is an efficient method to stay up to date on orthopaedic news, keep track of research in your subspecialty or monitor your favourite journals. There are several other special features in Google Reader that are beyond the scope of this article. You can manage subscriptions, star items, create labels to organize feeds or share items with colleagues or residents. Take a couple of minutes to read the Google Reader Help Tutorial to maximum your usage.

A Powerpoint Presentation with more step by step instructions can be watched below.

| [View](#) | [Upload your own](#)

Table 1. Orthopaedic RSS feeds

Here are some orthopaedic web sites that utilize RSS feeds to help you get started.

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Canadian Orthopaedic Association (<http://www.coa-aco.org/>)

- Feed location: Right hand side of home page under Syndicate.

- Feed URL: http://www.coa-aco.org/option,com_rss/feed,RSS2.0/

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Orthopaedic Web Links (OWL) (<http://www.orthopaedicweblinks.com/>)

- Feed location: Right hand side of home page under Member Area.

- Feed information available at http://www.orthopaedicweblinks.com/rss_feeds.html

- Feed URL: <http://www.orthopaedicweblinks.com/rss2.xml>

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Medscape Orthopedics (www.medscape.com/orthopaedics)

- Feed location: Right hand side of home page under Editorial Staff.

- Feed URL: <http://www.medscape.com/cx/rssfeeds/orthopaedics.xml>

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OrthoLinx (www.ortholinx.com)

- Feed URL: Multiple feeds available at <http://www.mdlinx.com/OrthoLinx/feeds.cfm>

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OrthoGate (www.orthogate.org)

- Feed location: Left hand side of home page under Syndicate
- Feed URL: http://www.orthogate.org/component/option,com_rss/feed,RSS2.0/

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JBJS - A (www.ejbs.org)

- Feed URL: <http://www.ejbs.org/rss/>

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JBJS - B (<http://www.jbjs.org.uk/>)

- <http://www.jbjs.org.uk/rss/>

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Clinical Orthopaedics and Related Research (www.corronline.com)

- Feed URL: <http://www.corronline.com/pt/re/corr/tocurrentrss.xml>

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Journal of Pediatric Orthopaedics (www.pedorthopaedics.com)

- Feed URL: <http://www.pedorthopaedics.com/pt/re/jpedortho/tocurrentrss.xml>

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Scoliosis (BMC) (www.scoliosisjournal.com)

- Feed URL: <http://www.scoliosisjournal.com/rss/>

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BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders (www.biomedcentral.com/bmcmusculoskeletdisord)

- Feed URL: <http://www.biomedcentral.com/bmcmusculoskeletdisord/rss/>

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International Orthopaedics (www.springer.com)

- Feed URL: <http://www.springerlink.com/content/100518/?sortorder=asc&export=rss>

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Journal of Trauma (www.jtrauma.com)

- Feed URL: <http://www.jtrauma.com/pt/re/jtrauma/rss.htm>

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Knee Surgery, Sports Traumatology, Arthroscopy (www.springer.com)

- Feed URL: <http://www.springerlink.com/content/101569/?sortorder=asc&export=rss>

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Journal of Orthopaedic Surgery and Research (BMC) (www.josr-online.com)

- Feed URL: <http://www.josr-online.com/rss/>

Current Opinion in Orthopaedics (www.co-orthopedics.com)

- Feed URL: <http://www.co-orthopedics.com/pt/re/coortho/toccurrentrss.xml>

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Spine (www.spinejournal.com)

- Feed URL: <http://www.spinejournal.com/pt/re/spine/toccurrentrss.xml>

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Journal of Orthopaedic Trauma (www.jorthotrauma.com)

- Feed URL: <http://www.jorthotrauma.com/pt/re/jorthotrauma/toccurrentrss.xml>

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Techniques in Knee Surgery (www.techknee.com)

- Feed URL: <http://www.techknee.com/pt/re/techknee/toccurrentrss.xml>

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Techniques in Shoulder and Elbow Surgery (www.shoulderelbowsurgery.com)

- Feed URL: <http://www.shoulderelbowsurgery.com/pt/re/techshoulder/toccurrentrss.xml>

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Journal of Orthopaedic Research (www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/jhome/111089308)

- Feed URL: <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/rss/journal/111089308>

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British Medical Journal (BMJ) (www.bmj.com)

- Feed URL: <http://www.bmj.com/rss/>

References

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<http://www.google.com/help/reader/help.html>

- How to Use Google Reader by Andy Wibbels

http://www.andywibbels.com/flash/google_reader.htm

- Google Reader Tutorial

<http://ycdl2.yukoncollege.yk.ca/googlereader/>

- Ripping it up with RSS

<http://wiki.elearning.ubc.ca/BasicsOfRSS>